

Appendix E

Sample Hymn Analyses (For Formation Use)

The following hymn analyses are provided as **illustrative examples** of how the *Hymn Analysis Template* (Appendix D) may be applied in practice. They are included to demonstrate method, clarity of reasoning, and pastoral restraint—not to offer a comprehensive evaluation of parish repertoire.

These examples intentionally present **two contrasting outcomes**: one hymn that is widely loved but determined to be **not suitable for the Sacred Liturgy**, and one hymn that clearly fulfills the theological and liturgical criteria of Catholic hymnody. Together, they show that the same principles can lead to affirmation or exclusion, depending on the text, voice, and liturgical function of the hymn.

The analyses are offered for **internal formation and study**. They are **not prescriptive mandates**, nor are they intended for public comparison, debate, or enforcement. They should be read **in continuity with the Parish Hymnody Study and its appendices**, especially the doctrinal framework outlined in *What Is a Catholic Hymn?* and the pastoral cautions articulated elsewhere in this work.

As with all materials in this study, the purpose of these examples is not to judge the faith, sincerity, or devotion of those who cherish particular hymns, but to assist pastors, musicians, and parish leaders in listening more attentively to **how the Church herself prays in the liturgy**, so that musical decisions may arise from fidelity, charity, and shared pastoral responsibility.

For the classification categories (C1–C4), see Appendix B.

HYMN ANALYSIS

Title: *Alleluia! Alleluia! Let the Holy Anthem Rise*

Category: C1 — Catholic Liturgical Hymn (Easter)

Communion Suitability: Yes (Easter Season)

General Liturgical Suitability: Entrance, Recessional, Easter Octave, Eastertide

1. TEXT SUMMARY

The hymn is a triumphant proclamation of the Resurrection. It calls the Church to raise a “holy anthem” in praise of the risen Christ. The verses recount Christ’s victory over death, His rising from the tomb, and the joy of the redeemed. The tone is jubilant, communal, and explicitly Easter-focused.

2. DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS

This hymn is doctrinally strong and fully aligned with Catholic teaching:

A. Explicit proclamation of the Resurrection

The text directly proclaims:

- Christ’s rising from the dead
- His victory over sin and death
- The joy of the redeemed
- The triumph of Easter morning

This is core Paschal Mystery theology.

B. Christ-centered, not self-centered

There is:

- no “I,” “me,” or “my”
- no emotional introspection
- no therapeutic language

The focus is entirely on **Christ’s saving work**.

C. Ecclesial voice

The hymn speaks in the **communal voice of the Church**, calling all believers to praise the risen Lord.

D. Liturgical clarity

The text is proclamation, not paraphrased divine speech. It does not require the assembly to sing as God or as Christ.

E. Strong Catholic identity

This hymn comes from the Irish Catholic tradition (Fr. Edward Caswall, Oratorian), widely used in Catholic parishes long before the modern hymnals.

It is doctrinally solid and unmistakably Catholic.

3. LITURGICAL SUITABILITY

This hymn is **highly suitable** for:

Entrance Hymn

Perfect for Easter Sunday, the Octave, and throughout Eastertide.

Recessional Hymn

Its triumphant tone makes it ideal for sending the assembly forth in Easter joy.

Communion (Easter Season)

Because it proclaims the Resurrection and expresses communal praise, it can be used during Communion in Eastertide.

Other uses

- Easter Vigil (after the Gloria)
- Easter Sunday Masses
- Easter Octave weekday Masses
- Parish missions during Easter
- Benediction in Easter season

This hymn is a **liturgical proclamation**, not a devotional text.

4. PASTORAL NOTES

This hymn is deeply woven into the memory of parishes like St. Mary's. It was a staple of Easter celebrations for decades — often used as:

- the **closing hymn** on Easter Sunday
- a **processional** during the Octave
- a **favorite** of older parishioners who grew up with the St. Basil and Paluch missalettes

Its melody is strong, memorable, and singable. Its text is joyful, doctrinal, and unmistakably Easter.

Singing it today reconnects the parish with its authentic Catholic musical heritage.

5. FINAL JUDGMENT

Category: C1 — Catholic Liturgical Hymn (Easter)

Communion: Suitable (Easter Season)

Liturgical Use: Entrance, Recessional, Eastertide

Summary: A triumphant, doctrinally strong Easter hymn proclaiming the Resurrection in the communal voice of the Church.

ENDNOTES

1. Liturgical hymns must proclaim the Paschal Mystery and express the Church's communal prayer to God. See USCCB, *Sing to the Lord* §§115–117; GIRM 47–48.
2. Easter hymns that explicitly proclaim Christ's Resurrection are especially suited for the Entrance and Recessional during Eastertide. See *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (2001), §§149–152.
3. Fr. Edward Caswall (1814–1878), an Oratorian priest, produced many English Catholic hymn translations and original texts widely used in 19th- and early 20th-century Catholic worship.

HYMN ANALYSIS

Title: *Be Not Afraid* **Category:** C4 — Not Suitable for Catholic Liturgy

Communion Suitability: No

1. TEXT SUMMARY

The hymn is built around a repeated refrain of reassurance (“be not afraid”) and verses that place extended words of comfort in the mouth of God. The text speaks directly to the individual believer, promising divine protection, guidance, and deliverance through trials. The tone is pastoral and consoling, emphasizing God’s closeness in suffering.

2. DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS

The primary doctrinal concern is the hymn’s extensive use of **first-person divine speech**. The verses present God speaking directly to the assembly in words not taken from Scripture or the liturgical books. This creates a theological problem: in the Sacred Liturgy, the assembly does not take on the voice of Christ or the Father, nor does it proclaim invented divine speech.¹

The hymn also reflects a **therapeutic spirituality** centered on emotional reassurance rather than proclamation of the Paschal Mystery. While the theme of trust in God is thoroughly biblical, the text does not articulate Christological, ecclesial, or sacramental doctrine. It does not express the Church’s liturgical voice, nor does it proclaim a mystery of salvation.

The hymn’s focus is individual rather than communal, devotional rather than liturgical, and consoling rather than doctrinal. These characteristics place it outside the scope of Catholic liturgical hymnody as defined in the Parish Hymnody Study.

3. LITURGICAL SUITABILITY

“Be Not Afraid” does not support any of the ritual actions of the Mass. It does not function as an Entrance hymn (no communal proclamation), an Offertory hymn (no sacrificial or ecclesial themes), or a Communion hymn (no Eucharistic doctrine). Its tone is reflective and personal, oriented toward private reassurance rather than the corporate worship of the Church.

The use of invented divine speech makes it unsuitable for proclamation by the assembly during the liturgy.² While the message of comfort is pastorally meaningful, the liturgy requires texts that express the Church’s faith, not imagined words spoken by God.³

4. PASTORAL NOTES

This hymn has brought comfort to countless Catholics, especially at funerals, healing services, and moments of personal difficulty. Its pastoral value is real and should be acknowledged with gratitude. Many parishioners have deep emotional connections to it. The classification of this hymn as unsuitable for Mass is not a judgment on its spiritual impact, but a recognition that devotional texts and liturgical texts serve different purposes in the life of the Church.

5. FINAL JUDGMENT

Category: C4 — Not Suitable for Catholic Liturgy

Communion: Not Suitable Summary: The hymn uses unauthorized divine speech and expresses a therapeutic, individual spirituality rather than liturgical proclamation.

ENDNOTES

1. The Catholic liturgy does not permit the assembly to take on the voice of Christ or the Father. See GIRM 29–30, 38, 91, 147; USCCB, *Sing to the Lord* §§115–117; USCCB, *Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church* (2020), “Doctrinally Inappropriate Texts.”
2. The priest or deacon proclaims the words of Christ in the liturgy, acting *in persona Christi*. The assembly never assumes this role. See GIRM 91, 147.
3. *Catholic Hymnody at the Service of the Church* (USCCB, 2020) warns against texts that “put words in the mouth of God that are not found in Scripture or the liturgical books.”